

The Earth
is Painted
War

Andreas Gripp

The Earth is Painted War

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The Earth is Painted War

Andreas Gripp

Silver Starling Press

ESSEX COUNTY

The Earth is Painted War

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Digital Edition

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Email: silverstarlingpress@gmail.com

Author Email: andreasgripp@gmail.com

Author Website:

andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp

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NOTES

Story 13, or Lucy Holds the Ball, pgs. 1-3:

Adderall is a stimulant that's a combination of amphetamine and dextroamphetamine

blanc sur blanc is French for *white on white*

Diablas, pgs. 14-16:

Diablas is Spanish for devil (fem.)

blanca is Spanish for *white* (fem.)

el amor is Spanish for *love*

Albariño is a popular Spanish wine

treceava is Spanish for *thirteenth* (fem.)

día is Spanish for *day*

corazón is Spanish for *heart*

Viernes is Spanish for *Friday*

gato negro is Spanish for *black cat*

Warning Signs, pgs. 22-25:

A *Vyshyvanka* is a traditional, embroidered Ukrainian shirt or dress

The Kreskin of *Kreskinesque* refers to The Amazing Kreskin, an American mentalist

shorthand refers to Pitman Shorthand, a condensation of language primarily used by stenographers to take notes much quicker than using conventional English and strongly resembles Arabic in its use of curves, loops, and dots. Andreas took shorthand in high school and scored an A.

The Acorn, pgs. 29-31:

la bellota is Spanish for *the acorn*

Lady Rubenstein, pgs. 32-33:

Dr. Brown's sodas are kosher and sold in a number of Jewish delis and restaurants

HaShem is a Hebrew term that means *the Name* of God and is used as a reverent substitute for YHWH

Cramoisi, pgs. 37-39:

Cramoisi is French for *Crimson*

à la gris is French for *in the grey*

The Plume, pgs. 43-44:

The Valley of *Megiddo* is where the battle of Armageddon will take place according to the Book of Revelation

Chicken, pgs. 49-52:

Jabālyā is a city in the Gaza Strip of Palestine

Identity Crisis, pgs. 66-68:

Liberace, pronounced Libb-ur-ah-chee, was a popular, very flamboyant pianist

Aire for Andrews McMeel, pgs. 82-83:

Andrews McMeel is the world's largest publisher of Affirmation Poetry and Insta-Poetry. Rupi Kaur, Atticus, and Amanda Lovelace are among the many poets on their roster. Andreas once sent them a manuscript and never heard back. He can't imagine why

Ray-Bans for Bartimaeus, pg. 84:

Bartimaeus is the blind man whom Jesus cures in the Gospels

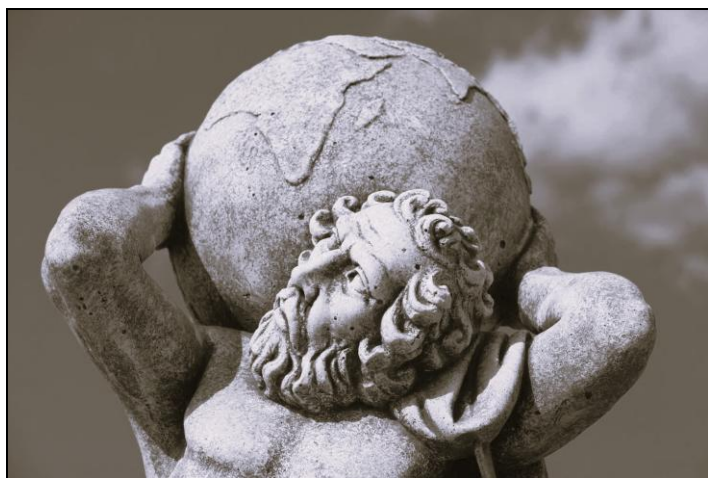
notre beauté is French for *our beauty*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Most of these poems were scribed in the month of June, 2025. This book is the sixth in a sextet of volumes written in 2025. The other five are *Les Vignettes*, *Vaudeville Messiah*, *The Sensuous Damned*, *Errant Little Mercies*, and *Yada Yada Kismet*. Each can be read as part of a greater whole or as a single episode of poems.

A day will inevitably arise when I'm no longer able to write and share my little stories in verse. But it's not today. And for that I am grateful.

—Andreas
July 2025



Story 13, or Lucy Holds the Ball

I hadn't read
a paper in 20 years —
with the *Star* and
New York Times

at the tip of my
scrolling finger, skipping
past the killings

like a lift on *Adderall*, arriving
at the hundredth
floor in under 7
seconds.

But *speed* is not the
reason for this story;
nor an *elevator*
leaving my guts
behind

on the tier
they say's *unlucky*,
that it's not even on the
buttons after 12,

that I deigned to climb
the *steps* to check it out,
this elusive, phantom storey —

with ghosts who haven't
moved up to those immaculate
suites in the sky, just a flash
of *blanc sur blanc*;

it's rather about
that Sunday morning
Times, its masthead
of the dead,
how there was nothing
beyond the white of absent
text, nothing of rape & theft,
the massacre of children,
or that every time you blink
there is a war.

And as for the coloured comics?
Just a solo
Peanuts strip.

In fact,
it was the *only* thing
to make it into print:

a football being kicked
into the trees, not a single
kite in sight, and a boy
who jumps for joy
beside his beagle,
revelling in the
changed,

that there is ecstasy
in paper, the brood of
fallen bark, the turning
of the page,

your every nail
that's gnawed unto
the bone, never-ever
presuming what happens
next.

Chester

The cat of which
I scrawl
is but a menace.

He doesn't make
an attempt
at being cute.
His purr is like a
Dodge without a muffler.
He will bite you
to the bone
and meow *it's love*.

I bet that he was
birthed
in smugglers' alley,
in a litter
among the litter,
taking a dump
wherever he pleased.
His papa
was a pirate,
felling Puss in Boots;

his mama vowed
to never have sex
again.

And he'll watch with
glee the mouse that
gets away, laughing
at our traps, downing
the block of brie
we leave at midnight
as a bait.

He's never done a
thing to help us out;
merely shrugs
with his indifference
to our pain, our sodden
handkerchief, thinking
he may use it
as a toy.

You tell me *every*
cat's a booger
and you're right.

He plays us
like a fiddle
on the roof. Leaves us
for the larks
to paint us white.

He devoured
all our chocolates
by the tree, then knocked
it down at Christmas
as he peed. Sits
upon our laptop
as if it was made
to warm his ass. Scratched
up every Warhol
in his reach. Our sofa
like the Passion
of the Christ.

And yet we
still adore him,
cradle him in our arms,

like the chubby,
newborn babe
we never had,

his broadening
Cheshire grin
amid our cuddles,
our stupid, googly
eyes,

a canary
in his gullet
we thought had flitted
out the window
to be free.

Visiting My Mother at St. Leo's Cemetery

We discern the milky
seeds
of dying dandelions,
afloat in
mid-June breeze,

and I tell you
as I boy I saw them
through my bedroom window,
wondering how it snowed
when it was sultry
beneath the sun.
It was only after that

when my mother
spoke of *wishes*,
I should run into the
yard and pluck a stem,
blow my breath in
yearning, seeing
what might come true.

I asked her if
this weed was *King*
of Flowers, if our cat
was a distant cousin,
if a wish was
better than a prayer
(the latter gone unanswered
in her days of sick & blood);

if it mattered
if my eyes were closed
or open;
and if I peeked, was it
critical if I witnessed
where they landed, like
bowing my head
at grace

while glancing at
the others, thanking
some fickle God
who'd take offense
if He ever caught me,

make me go to
bed without my dinner,

my litanies
unheeded as she passed,
drifting off my tongue,
useless as a cloud
that gives no rain when it is
begged, a winter-hearted
genie in the wind.

How Far Would You Go for a Gag

Our long-awaited
jaunt to *gay Paree*
has been postponed.
I try to be upbeat
as I spring the news:

*In a year
it will still be there.
It's not going anywhere.*

Aside from the predictable
poet and I didn't even know it
remark, you bring up the
chance that it *won't*,
blown right off the map
in a Putin tantrum,
or as the bullseye for a
space rock—or suffer yet
another bubonic plague.

I take it even further
than your gloom—
that Parisians will roll
their streets up like a scroll,

take apart their homes,
disassemble the
Eiffel Tower
like Meccano,

once they hear that
we are coming;
that we've waited
20 years for their baguettes;

corking their champagne,
stuffing every suitcase
with berets, leaving
every *Fifi*
with their friends in
Monaco—

which should *be*
a part of France
I've heard them say;
that its monarch is no
Louis—Fourteenth or
otherwise—

and the only good
thing about it
was Princess Grace,
who, upon visiting
the Champs-Élysées,
was struck that every inch
was crammed with lovers,
no space without a kiss,
no scene that wasn't
painted —
and that Khrushchev
was a monster
on the news, vowing
when she was there

to launch it
into orbit,

once he tried the cognac
from Marseille, which,
I've been told,
is just as good as Paris
in November, the airfare
half the price.

Diablas

Date is one of those
terms I misconstrue.

A box within a
box of 30 squares,

that when we spoke
about a date, I
envisioned a tapas
bar, a duo of sinking
flames inside a jar,
drowning in their
heated
wax & love; flamenco
and a beam of blanca
moon—seeping through
the window to our
hands, fused in
el amor;

not this raisin's
doppelgänger,

one you left this
evening at my door,
my darling señorita, without
a single knock—dry, wrinkled,
chewie to the tooth,
with nothing to
wash it down,
not a decanter
of Albariño
which I imagined us
imbibing,

on this Friday *treceava*,
13th of the month,
a simple día
in my calendar—
hung upon the
fridge, with a magnet of
magenta, shaped like a
corazón,

forgetting passion
which is ventured
on this *Viernes*
should take a cheque—

not a twilight
bill of fare

but one of broken rain,
the kind which seems to
fall from time to time, always
before the *stroke* of Saturday,

these hours of
splintered glass,
reflecting my
face no more,

gato negro
'neath a ladder,
unlucky little
devil that he is.

Victor

Our friend prefers Victor
to Vic. He has no patience
for those too lazy
to include
the second syllable.

What's the big deal?
he hears, from Steve
not Steven, Dave not David,
Mike not Michael.

His parents
had stayed up
throughout the night, just days
before he was
born, chose *Victor* over 100,000
others, that they declined to
save some dollars
on the engraving of his bracelet,
never falling
to truncation,
that *Vic*
was nowhere to be spoken,
from junior kindergarten
to MBA,

birthday gifts unopened
if a short-form had been
scrawled,

saying
it wasn't him,
that he refused to wear a lanyard—
pre-scribed with Sharpie black,
by someone who assumed
it didn't matter,

and he won't check-in
to the hospital
on point of death
if they get it wrong,

swearing the carver of
his tombstone
had better *etch* in
all six characters,

just a single letter shy of
seventh heaven,

the luck of the dice,
a wonder of the world,

that he really doesn't
need to add a y,
knowing to him will go
the spoils either way.

Upstream in 2nd Grade

The only thing
I gave her was
a poem. Probably
pretty shoddy. Scrawling
that I loved her
at the bottom. With an
unused salmon crayon
from the box. I never
thought I'd need it.
Draw a pinkish fish

attempting to *swim*
to its place of birth.
Maybe had a crush
when it was young.
Make it leap the rocks
beneath the current.
Always against the grain.

A grizzly in the middle
of sierra, expecting the
easy meal,

scribbled past his lines
in heartache rouge.
Startled by the madness
of the finned. The stupor
on its face. What
it's willing to *do*
for the chance to spawn.
Or love. That colour
never matters
in the dark. When the light
has just gone out. When we
remember to remember to
forget. Evanescing

like a moonlit
aspiration. In the brush
of sleep from eyes.
In the seconds
that it gambols
off the tip, of mountains
and of tongues.

Warning Signs

You say our *survival*
is dependent
on the heeding
of *warning* signs.

A tickle in my throat
precedes a cough,
and the cellist
can somehow
sense it, glares
an evil eye, just daring
me to do it,

become the centre
of attention
like the imbecile
applauding
before the adagio
is done,

unaware a
pause
will herald *coda*,

like a catching-
of-one's-breath,
once the *firing*
squad takes aim,

that they'll blast away
your brain
upon the wall,
tear the Vyshyvanka
off your back,
say there's nowhere
else to flee that isn't
"Russia" —

or like the time
the road was icy
with the brakes about
to give—your vision
Kreskinesque,

that the *bridge*
is closed
is a horrible way
to tell you
you're about to die,

that the river
is frozen over —
but not enough to
prevent you falling
through its frosty
sheen — like the skater
too obsessed with
figure 8s, has no *inkling*
her time has
come, that she'll swell
up like a fish
upon the dredging,
mouth agape, a hookless
suffocation.

I hold our humble
baby in my arms,
watch her naïveté
of smile, warning she *hasn't*
got a clue
of what's to come,
millions more of *her*
in sterile cloth,

unless they're
somehow birthed
in bombed-out basements,
the *Hospital* above
in *Arabic*,
curving lines and dots
a ghost of shorthand,

which had gone the
way of Beta, Blackberry,
any B-word
not in style,
leaving *nothing*
that is hidden,

no miracle of teething,
elemental word
that's just *exhaled*,
initial steps of
wonder on the broadloom,
like footprints
on some moon
we thought we'd conquered
long ago.

The Stroke

Maybe a shot of luck —
the deflecting of fired
lead.

Or a golfer's
placid putt
into a cup; the baseball
which is launched
into the air —
handled by bleacher
creatures, bathed in Yankee
beer.

A brushing of the ego.
Acquiescent you are right.

A caress with caring hands;
the beginnings of
consummation.

A comely *swirling*
from a nib & fountain
ink,

scribing *love*
in all its facets.

Quiescent paddles
along the river
in canoes, or frenzied in
the race of
dragon boats,
passing the swimmer
who took a plunge
into its murk;
lying on his back,
bedevilled by the sun;

and the stab within
my temple, sudden slur
of speech; the numbness in my
arm and icy fingers,
which moments
ago had pet our purring
cat, who has no idea
why I'm prostrate on
the floor,

awaiting an *angel's*
feathered fondle,
her wings to
lift me up beyond the
ceiling, where everything is
gentle, soothing,

the heavens like the
sea and she a ship,
convex in her sails—

or down on through
the tiles, a sneering
demon

dragging me by the
feet, like the pull
from a cedar galley,
its many oarsmen
lashed
into rapidity, no other
touch but this
till the journey's done.

The Acorn

You wished it
were a ball,
its pentagons—
dark & light,

kicked it off
the path like
Lionel Messi,
feigned a soaring
goal by Argentina, raised

the cup of gold
above your head, claimed
the world
as yours, blessed by
Pope & Caliph,

forgetting *la bellota*

can someday lift
its crown
above us all,

to vaults of
star & sun,

spread its *arms*
to empyrean,

the lilting of its
choir, warbling of their
praise,

its entreaty
unto God
with leafy hands,
foliate fingers
clasped
in supplication,
pleading mercy in the
ether, not for the
sake of *itself*

but for *us*,
for our primacies
gone amiss,
in the still that
solemnity gives—

no confetti,
no parade,

beyond our shapes
& karats,

our faulty *tally*
of its worth.

Lady Rubenstein

ran the deli
by Central Park,
ran her mouth more
than the food, always
had something to
say between our bites of
matzo balls, our swigs
of Dr. Brown's,

entreating us to
never waste a
morsel, that in Belzec
they would *kill*
for a single pea,
that the dying
would bury the dead,
climb beside a corpse with
end-of-breath;
so much skin-and-bone
they should have been buoyant
as a feather, floated
up to *HaShem*
like the fog.

But the day
before she passed:
the hole is
more important
than the bagel,

forever in its
place when even
the final crumb's
consumed,
whit and seed

are given to the
wind, to divvy
as she does
among the wings,

seldom so opaque
they cannot rise above
the dirt and waft away.

Twice a Day and Broken Clocks

We read that Trump's
just pardoned the guys
who freed the sharks:

Twice a day and broken clocks.

Ford has doled out
cheques that ease our
burden:

Twice a day and broken clocks.

I fare even worse than
that—having breakfast
at my lunch,
syrup *dripping*
from my pancakes
on the tiled, breakroom
floor, the custodian with
a scowl,
passive-aggressive
hello.

The tip-off's
always at 7.
Yet now I'm at my desk
like it's a quarter after
3, a four-foot
pile of pages
I have to grade;

ready to topple *over*
amid the blades
of a cooling fan,
my hand upon its lean
above my head,
like Atlas who struggles
to balance
a crooked Earth,

who should be hanging
out with *Sisyphus*
instead—their weight of sweat
& burden.

They say the Autobahn's
a feat of engineering—
cars a peeling thunder
in the air, drivers
with their hair in
copulation, orgasmic
in their smiles.

No. I won't be going
there. There's *nothing*
draped in swastikas
worth a nod.

A thing
they could've done
to make me tip my
Raptors hat,

make me
acquiesce
they could be right
about the time.

Cramoisi

The eyes of your
great-grandkid
spy your spouse
inside the frame,
the only shot
that's left
in monochrome, asking
why the world was
coloured
black & white,

all your others *burned*
in careless
flame—after your suck
on cigarette,

one you knew should not
be puffed in bed,
your soulmate on her
side,
five years past your
vows, guilty
you got *out*
with just her son,

before your memories
& your love
were flash & kindle,

feigning someone
threw a cocktail
through the glass—
a Vichy
partisan, because your
vive la France!—

drab & pale
the sum of
cheaper film,

yet it wouldn't have
changed a thing—
the earth was painted
war—in ninety
hues of grey—

a splash of crimson
now & then,

purged from
what was living,

cloaked with
smoke & ash,
buried in your sorrow
à la gris.

Testing the Wi-Fi at the Westtown Pentecostal Church

*'Cause then there was this boy whose
parents made him come directly home
right after school. And when
they went to their church
they shook, and lurched all over
the church floor.
He couldn't quite explain it,
they'd always just gone
there.*

—Crash Test Dummies

The internet was
down for half-a-minute
and you said it was just
a hiccup.

I guess *glitch*
is no longer en vogue,
and *fucked*
cannot be uttered
where we are,

in the parlour
beside the sunny
sanctuary, where we've
heard they talk in tongues,
tumble amid the pews.

We discuss the girl
who had the hiccups,
not for minutes
but for *years* —
28 of them in fact —
went from Brownie
to PhD, designing a
string of satellites
when they *ceased*.

She had to learn to
converse

all over — without the
sudden spasm —
which all were accustomed
to, a more “sophisticated”
cousin of the burp.

You look it up on
Mayo—say they're caused
by too much soda,
a time of stress, duress;

and of course there is
the man, who, on his wedding
day, guzzled down a vat
of Dr. Pepper;
had them so bad
he rushed right through
his vows like an auctioneer,
ending on a *hic*,
both his Pastor
& his bride

astonished by his
dialect of love, this gift
of the Holy Spirit,
who whispers *nothing*
is so strange it can't be
spoken, nothing so bizarre
we mustn't hear.

The Plume

You say it's hard to
breathe
amid the smog. Heavens
an orange blaze, at the
start of 9am, looking
like some backdrop
to Megiddo.

Cross your legs
and lean against
the trunk of a
grieving spruce,
mourning for its
brethren like a willow.

Now inhale the
caustic smoke,
like you would a
cheap cigar.
Cough your invocation
to the current:

We know not what we do.

Then shed your tears like
sap—slowly, at the pace of
a creeping slug, bleeding
for the birds who need
to flee, as if you're atoning
for our sins
within the sullied
light of noon.

Only when you've sipped
what now is sour,
proffered on a sponge
that's dipped in streams,
can you choke that
it is finished,
can you hope for
restoration
of the gone.

McCloskey's Fish & Chips

Grandad stopped getting fish
& chips

once they were no
longer wrapped in
newsprint, the headlines
from the night
before.

*It sucked up the grease,
he croaks, kept it warm
in the wintertime,*

saying nothing
of the ink
that would have seeped
into his haddock,
the germs
from the pressman's
hands, that the soap
was always gone
in those early morning
hours of the run.

It's the only way I
ever got the news,
he notes in spotty
recall, after we'd heard the
tales of no TV, wireless,

that the London *Times*
was just a little pricey
for the day, a subscription
wrought in *pounds* —
of money and of flesh —
that he was perfectly
contented

to read of a ship
which *sunk*,
another *Ripper's*
on the loose,
of a bombing
by the IRA, as he
dipped what we call
fries
in *Worcestershire*,

and not just loss of
life, but the races
down at Ascot,
the complex cricket
scores,
the win by his
darling Ipswich
on the road in
Liverpool;

but always back to
death—
Lennon's
headline shooting,
the Diana-Dodi
crash, the obit
of an adolescent
love, who'd marooned
him at the chapel
in '52, neither
having funds by
which to live;

swallowing
every story with
the batter, every
inverted letter
tartar-stained,
sticking in his
foodpipe
every while,
before guzzling
down his Guinness,
feigning he loved the
taste.

Chicken

I dare you
to pick up the
frog that's in the
grass. Coated in a
sheen of slime. I think
I hear my father
with the mower.
I'd prefer
not to get in his
way. Be the cause
of another repair.

I dare you
to ring their
door & run away.
I think I pulled
a hamstring
playing ball. Besides,
they're sick & hard of
hearing. Even bagpipes
wouldn't do it
and they're Scottish.

I dare you
to watch The Exorcist
alone. In the dark.
Looks too fake
to me. I'd only laugh
my head off
& wake the house.

I dare you
to ask that gorgeous
girl to dance. In
front of her clique
of friends. I've never
liked this song.
If it was Rock and Roll
All Nite instead of Beth.

I dare you
to get on the
Super Himalaya. I'm way too
old for that now.
Been there. Bought the
fucking T-shirt.

I'd rather give
my seat to a
kid who's poor.

I dare you
to check the photos
from Jabālyā. The
schools of chalk &
blood. Body
parts under the
desk. There
in the light of day.
My hand is
quicker than the
eye. Even when it
quivers as I scroll.
I zoomed-in
20 pics
from Sandy Hook.
Ain't my virgin
rodeo.
There's nothing
I'm afraid of.

I simply
cannot see it
when the sunlight's
on my phone
& the day mode doesn't
work. I'd go & get
a new one
but the buses are on strike.
My car's still in the shop.
Do you know how much it
costs to get it fixed?

Pockets

*I've got one hand in my pocket
and the other one is playin' a piano*
— Alanis Morissette

I can never have enough pockets.
I've bought a dozen cargo pants
for the multifarious pockets
that they boast. No other kinds will do.

I need a pocket for my keys.
I need a pocket for my wallet.
I need a pocket for my covid mask
and ones for the notes I jot —
with a selection of ballpoint pens.

I realize I've embarrassed you on dates —
your slacks without a ripple
while mine are hugely bulged,
sagging from added weight:
my plums and water bottle,
my phone and cigarettes,
the pair of Ralph Lauren —
hoping the lenses aren't scratched
by the deodorant I carry just in case.

I bring a bar of Dove, a folded facecloth
with me when we're at the shopping
mall—their bathrooms are notorious
for their running-out-of-soap,
for their dryers on the fritz,
that hygiene's more important
than my wearing some haute couture.

And I've ketchup when we need it—
the food court cutting costs,
too cheap to include
a packet with our fries.

I want *pockets* within my pockets—
ones that securely snug my
Fisherman's Friend,
knowing I can't afford
to drop them on the floor, how germly
that would be, though I have some
sanitizer with me if it happens.

You tell me I should get a better system,
like you with your nylon purse,

that women
are a walking *pharmacy*,
have ten times more to carry
than us males, have foregone the many
pockets since the Holocene began,
knowing *one* was a pain in the ass:

for the desert kangaroo
with precious lading,
the knackerling baby within,
hopping along the outback
without a means to ease her burden.

Alexander's Cooling Off

It was one of those awkward,
shocking moments. The steam of
the apartment.

Humidity like a rug—

much too drenched to
step on in your socks,
that's gained
a dozen pounds
in half an hour,
could floor you with
a slap.

But this isn't about
a carpet
you could have bashed
against the wall in your
frustration—
acting as if you're ridding
it of dust—

it's about you being
apprised
on how to get the blades
whirling (like the propeller
of an airplane
in the days of modesty),
as if some sweaty,
senseless virgin:

*Put the male end
into the female.*

The three-pronged plug
you inserted in the
socket, after the wince of
hesitation, the closest thing to
sex you ever did.

Haight-Ashbury

The temperature in our apartment
is always moderate,
20 Celsius, or as our friends in
San Francisco call it, 68,

never too frigid,
too torrid, as pleasant as its people
who birthed a twentieth-
century love of gay & poetry,
where Ginsberg howled
and Ferlinghetti kept the city
lights plugged in,

grateful for their dead, their '67
a narrow notch
before some elusive ideal,
one that ever-hovers
within our reach.

You say *never touch*
the thermostat
and I mildly comply.

What we call *warmth*
is but the middle,
the centre of some utopia
absent of fire and of ice.

Yes, the ground there occasionally
quakes, much like our walls and
ceiling do, whenever the tenants
upstairs
argue about the bills

or break into a dance
we've been curious to behold.

Smut

—a small flake of soot or other dirt

Oxford English Dictionary

To say my brand-
new book of poems is
just a magnet for the
dust

is an egregious
understatement.

It's the maid
in fishnet stockings, feathers
in her hand, bending
over with a twerk,
whenever I enter the
office.

It's the Swiffer
that's ascending to the
ceiling (one that's
made of teasing glass)—

danger *thudding*
upon its clarity
like a lark.

It's the Dirt
Devil
drafted into service—
like the cavalry
on horseback,
fire from its nostrils,
its tail of red
that's locked into
the socket, coiled
like a serpent,
because nothing else
can gather up the
mites, their hunger
never chuffed.

If they stopped to view
my scribbles they might be
fans, foregoing their all-
day breakfast

just to read my *absurdity*—

like this, for instance,
where they line
up on the shelf
like an ellipsis
that is endless, half a trillion
strong, little pens and
paper in their hands,
awaiting my auto-
graph—

and one who lifts her
skirt, imploring me to
sign her naughty thigh.

Osaka

I think I've had enough
of our know-it-all
acquaintance.
He'd be another *friend*
if he wasn't such a dick.

Just today, in the
hallway for example,
after I mumbled
about the swallow
in the soffit,
how the raptors
hadn't scales
but pretty plumage:

*Well, birds aren't only
DESCENDED from dinosaurs —
they ARE dinosaurs.*

Which to me is ridiculous.
Tell me to my face
that the goldfinch in your
hand belongs in the latest
Jurassic World.

That the seed
which she is eating
is akin to *Ankylosaurus*,
hard as fucking armor,

that its beak could break
a 4-by-4 in two.

But I bite my tongue
so I won't have to bear
his smarmy condescension.
It bleeds as if a T-Rex
chomped its bit.
I'm in no condition now
to give rebuttal, my
Godzilla similitude—
warbling like a nuthatch
every morning;
stomping his way
through buildings as
he sings. Burning
this fellow to cinders
where he stands,

my cheering
that is muffled
by his *roar*, swelling
like a pillow
with all its feathers
down my throat.

Early Morning Rain

In the yard,
you felt sorry for the slug
that crept so slowly up the stem
of one of your greens.

*Poor thing,
it doesn't even have a shell
to call a home.*

Afterward,
I compared it with its cousin,
the snail, several of which will
gather in the garden
after an early morning rain—

sturdy,
in the swirly cave it carries
on its back,
a place to retract its head in
when it pours,
feigning it isn't there, perhaps,
should a desperate, homeless mollusk
come to call,

knowing there *isn't*
any room
for two,

and yet burdened
by that extra weight,
its inability to travel
wherever it may wish,
at its turtle-like, sloth-like pace,
like a car that's always pulling
a camper/trailer,

never having the mettle
to face the world
when things get tough,
even ducking in its hovel
when there isn't a cloud
in the sky.

Identity Crisis

*I'm a juvenile product of the working class
whose best friend floats in the bottom of a
glass*

—Elton John, *Saturday Night's Alright
(For Fighting)*

*Any bloke who had a six-pack at over fifty
is either a movie star or a complete wanker
with too much time on their hands*

—Ben Elton, *Identity Crisis*

You came home with
the Elton thriller,
dog-eared from its time
in Value Village,
some mystery-thing
of murder; toxic
& transgender;
saying everything is
cloudy
when it's queer,

the translucency
of glass, its mists of
light and shadow;

like Elton's middle
chapter
of *Liberace*,
smiles in place of
scowls, anger that is
kneaded
in the slits of pounded
keys,

melting like the ice
beneath the weight
of 40%.

And I simply
can't get them straight
to save my life,
the dividing crack of
accent, the fissure betwixt
Australian, British English,

wondering if they've had
the chance to meet,
some glorious
seventh day at Conner's
Pub, when Orion's
bow

was cutting through the
haze of evening smog,
or perhaps that's Sagittarius

and I've gotten confused
again, lament the aggregate's
forever muddled
below the plane of
parallel things.

King of Spades

My uncle will be
immortal.

He's there on
Google Maps—
its intrusive
views of street—
holding up a
spade beside his
porch, astounded
by the Prius
snapping a pic of his
bungalow. They neglected
to blur his visage
like they say they always
do.

The street isn't notable
at all, just a row
of boring houses
and he knows it. Most
of their blinds—ajar,
peers from those who need
to get-a-life.

But the spade, everyone
will wonder what it's
for — trimming, planting;
held in a pendulous
sway —

like the stupid, pirate
ship at the Western Fair,
on which I'd gotten sick,
that he had
a 2-for-1
but wouldn't join me —

neither on the fun-
house, ferris wheel;

not even the kiddie
coaster
which was barely
off the ground,
fearing that he'd upchuck
worse than me,

his image
forever branded
in the minds of those
around. *The guy can't handle
a ride!*

But back to the garden
again—it was only 3-
by-5, barely enough
to sow a row of beans,
a few tomato plants,
some sprigs of dill
for soup,

which he slurped
like a bloody *Shop-Vac*,
one they could have used
on that nausea-
inducing thing, from which
I staggered
like a wounded
buccaneer, to my uncle
who had watched,

his gaze upon the ground,
his face a Roma-red,
praying none of his
nosy neighbours were
around, sneering
as if he'd been caught

with his pants
down at the ankles
in the dirt.

On Having to See the Dentist

We'll miss the Medieval Faire,
knights that will joust
for maidens,
ne'er do wells
& cannons,

and Zoltan the Adequate,
who bills himself as
travelling magician,
fire eater, and all around
madman.

It takes a peculiar
kind of deranged
to *devour* the cavorting
flames, especially
without the Pepcid
of today.

We're too chintzy
to pay for tickets
to this thing,

its romantic
anachronists,

their rose-coloured
eyewear

& the horses
on which they
gallop.

They wouldn't last
a second
in this era. Inform them
of their appointment—
with a drunken, 12th-
century *toothsmith*,

the yank of wooden pliers,
the pain if he gets it wrong,
the agony if he's proven
right,

that all the brandy
in the world
won't make it better.
It never does.

Both back
then & now. And we have it
at the tip of our touch;

no chair in which to
squirm, the dread that every
tick will last an hour.

Going Our Separate Ways

We love
when we are sober.
Hate when
we are drunk.

I write of our
emotion—our on &
off rapport,

and not of
situation, where
one of us
finally *adieux*,

though the last time
I was sotted,
stumbled up the
stairs, smashed
your favourite vase—

which had held
the ashy sand
from the Gobi Desert

(the only place
on Earth
we never quarrelled),

you grumbled
of a camel, the rift
between its humps,
their sag from wear
and water,
the weight of
some proverbial
straw.

Franklin, 2.0

It's only the beholder's
eye, you've said,
that makes you
do the things you do—

giving an appellation
to every roach
that's crossed your path,
believing they'll
inherit the Earth;

every cavity in the corner
with a piece of camembert—
not a single trap in sight.
A mouse deserves much more
than processed cheese.

We thought you mad
when you spurned each
opportunity—
to *rid* the rooms of
spiders, the eggs of
brown recluse,

that venom is mis-
judged, like the snake's
out in the desert of
New Mexico,
where you hugged
every cactus like a
cat.

The spawn of every
fly you'd dubbed *Mag-
nificent*, said the rat
was like a chipmunk
in our scraps —
that fleas were entertainers,
jumping like acro-
bats. And the creatures
of the night? Their bite
just means *I love you*,
which you uttered
in the halls of junior
high, to the girl
who called you *gross*,
disgusting, a *zit face*
to the max,

that day you
came out of the rain,
head and shoulders
slumped like letter f,
hands and mouth of
mud from kissing worms.

“Rusty”

Your pages from the printer
are crumpled into balls, each one
set aflame. You call them stars
and name them: *Antares, Betelgeuse,*
Sirius and *Sol*.

The light-faded poster for
the original *Alien*—
on the wall of your recollection.
In space, no one can hear you scream.
But you know your midnight bellow
caused ETs to cup their ears.

Your palms had scooped the sand
when you went to the beach as a girl—
every grain a pinhead in the sky.
Whenever the dark arose,
you hoped your father was
too drunk to call for you,
poor ginger-headed pre-
teen with a welling in both orbs.
You never should have *opened*
the bedroom door. No matter
how passive the knock.
Who else was there to blame?

You titled your tetralogy
after *mother*, who kept
her tongue in a sieve
and uttered nothing.
Not even the habitual

*we never-ever talk
about such things.*

The next morning, you thought of
what remained upon the shore:
a castle, peopled with the
butts of cigarettes, ones he'd
lazily tossed aside,

as you built
and you built
and you built while hoping
your ass wasn't showing in the sun.

In 44 to 46 Syllables

I am asked to write a Sijo
on the state of the fucking
world. Sijo has no swearing
in its lines of three or six.
I have yet to see a child
who's been bombed to bits in Sijo

have you?

Aire for Andrews McMeel

I'm unable to offer
your readers
what they want—
the soothe of
a happy close, affirming
their sense of worth,
it's gonna be A-OK—

they've *got* this, hand
them a handkerchief—
embroidered—to absorb
their sobs of joy.

Only the real-
ization every
movie cannot have
a grand finale,
where the hero saves
the world—

it might just be
his *room*, the snort
of heroin:

then the scroll on
black of credits,
a dirge from
Shostakovich, the ceiling
lights that hint
it's time to go.

Ray-Bans for Bartimaeus

The Word says scars
are but the sum of
notre beauté. The girl
who survived the fire
is the most ravishing of us all.
Just murmur that you love her
into what's left of her knobby ear.

She cannot hear you.

In the End there was a whisper,
and the whisper was
with God
and the whisper *was* God.
With no one who could listen,
He caused every single
star to *adios*. A flash & burn
of two-hundred
sextillion
bulbs. Forgetting only
the blind are able to see.

The beautiful, beautiful blind.





Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 relocated to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over three-dozen books of poetry, including *Clocking the Equus: Poems Selected and New* (2025). His poems have been praised for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling.



A nearly life-long Londoner, Andreas Gripp now lives in Leamington, Ontario, with his wife, Carrie. The author of forty books of poetry, his poems illuminate both the quotidian and the grand in an interchangeable manner. Poems which are rooted in *storytelling*: meaningful and accessible from the start.

The Earth is Painted War is a series of tragicomic ballads endeavouring to make sense of contemporary human affairs, from the personal to the socio-political. The offbeat and the absurd are never far away. The pirouette into poignancy is often just a line ahead.

Your poems move effortlessly, from a quaint or innocuous observation to their unlikely denouement, succeeding in always turning a thing on its head! I love the sweeping twists you deftly wring out of your closing lines, at once so obvious in their necessity and altogether out of left field. Spontaneous and clever and always a refreshing surprise!

-Teresa Daniele, author of *The Arc of the Infinite Line*



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